

The Long View



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Ending the Divide and Rule of Populist Discourse



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In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Not a day goes by – in the so-called West at least – where moral and social panics and hysteria rage. Many, but not all of these involve Muslims and Islam in some way or form: the great replacement theory, the idea of Muslims as entryists and fifth columnists, or the capitulation of Western legal systems to sharia law, the political and military resistance to Israeli occupation of Palestine. Others however do not – on the surface at least – have a Muslim focus: the fight over gender and identity, the teaching in schools of non-heterosexual lifestyles as normative, male and female roles in society, and the fight over the limits and even the legitimacy of abortion. Whether cultural, religious, political, these panics are often portrayed in the populist imagination as existential questions, demanding resolution if not by the state, then by the mob.

As Islam is a way of life, it is unsurprising and indeed apt for Muslims to have opinions on any and all debates. Many times, this takes the form of supporting one or other side in a debate and arguing that Islamic values align with that side (on occasion Muslims can be found using this tactic on both sides of a debate). Whilst there can be merit in these methods, doing so without an overview of the issues being discussed can reduce such attempts to simply reproducing the argument of others with no Islamic insight or input.

This issue picks apart some of the problems arising out of such interventions and debates. Our lead piece, provides a powerful critique of how the racism of western, specifically European Union rhetoric on Palestine, is not only ubiquitous but foundational. Not only is there is no engagement to be had with this type of discourse, its premises mean that to challenge it, those in opposition – Muslim or otherwise – must take a decolonial overview before tackling it.

In this essay, **Denijal Jević** takes a cold, hard look at the positioning of the European Union's position on Palestine. It is not simply a case of hypocrisy that EU institutional language is racist but as Jević argues, central to the idea of Europe itself, as shown in hideous candour in the recent statements of Josep Borrell. The Union's High Representative for Security and Foreign Affairs claimed in effect, that the non-European world was a jungle, always threatening to overgrow the European garden. The communiqués of the EU on Palestine simply reflect the approbation of a colonial project for continuing settler colonial and indeed genocidal activities in Palestine by Israeli forces.

Without this type of political and moral overview, conversations about Palestine can and are lost in a frame of reference that erases colonial and genocidal violence and creates a debate, at best about competing

sets of rights (Israeli versus Palestinian), or worse, about the legitimacy of colonial settler projects.

Looking at the experiences of Muslims in Finland, both converts and those raised in the faith, **Linda Hyökki** argues for a Muslim language and praxis that challenges prevailing discourse around minorities and cultural rights. Specifically, she argues that analogising Islamic practices, whether fasting, praying or celebrating Eid with Christian practices for the sake of intercultural communication and also legal recognition creates many pitfalls. Not least of these is the reinforcing of the perception of majority society as culturally Christian (even when in many cases the majority of many Europeanised states practice the faith less), therefore giving grist to the mill that there is a culture war or clash between the faiths. Worse still, is the fact that in turning Islamic faith practice into cultural rights as per the prevailing discourse, we risk the same loss of the same faith practice as per the majority society - in effect Muslims secularise, identifying with Islam in a nominal way.

Nargess Moballeghi looks at the furore after the overturn of Roe v. Wade by the US Supreme Court last year. The fallout from this case saw people from all walks of life, worldview, faith and geography argue over which side was right. As Moballeghi points out, neither of the pro-life or women's bodily autonomy positions sit within any frame of Islamic thinking, yet Muslims were to be found in both camps arguing vigorously that the side they had taken was the Islamic one. Moballeghi argues that a moment for changing the terms of the conversation has been lost.

Our final contribution is from **Omar Hijazi** who looks at the self-imposed limitations that even those arguing for a transformative Islamic world-view place on themselves. In response to a piece from a well-known blog, attacking Iran's Islamic revolution, Hijazi argues that this type of critique is simply a mirror of secular westernised polemic given an 'Islamic' legitimacy using a sectarianised lens. Hijazi argues that whilst critique is necessary and vital of all movements, especially Islamic ones, the type espoused in the blog he takes issue with lacks any depth, and finds the author(s) who claim to be also the deepest critics of western politics and mores in fact in bed with the very same.

Whilst Muslim ways of thinking are the focus of three of these essays, the issues raised are pertinent to all of us who want a world transformed from the current inequalities and violence of our age. What hope do movements and projects for transformation have when we are unable to get beyond the limitations imposed upon us by the very powers and systems that oppress us? It's time to change the conversation.

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Racism and Colonial Fantasies: The EU's Political Communication on Palestine

Denijal Jević unpacks the European Union's proclamations on Palestine, arguing that the racism contained therein are not exceptional, but foundational to European ideas of itself.

The Zionist colonial project is fundamental to Europe's understanding of itself and the rest of the world. Europe needs its projection of the inferior other in order to construct itself as 'civilized'. Palestine remains a crucial site of an ongoing European genocidal settler-colonial advance and a mechanism of meaning-making for European identity and the realization of white supremacy and other racist fantasies.

The new Israeli government has been described by some commentators as the most far-right regime in Israel's history. While the most recent government may be more outspoken about its genocidal intentions and might increase its violent policies against Palestinians, it does not represent an extreme deviation from mainstream Zionist politics. In fact, all forms of Zionism, be they liberal, religious, or qualified with any other adjectives, are based on a settler-colonial conquest which, at its core, is genocidal.

The new Israeli government continues to transparently promote its racist ideologies. [Netanyahu announced](#) further expansion of illegal settlements and, effectively, a strengthening of the apartheid structures by furthering Jewish supremacy in Palestine, proclaiming: "Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right to all areas of the Land of Israel." While the Israeli apartheid regime is transparently communicating its genocidal approach, Israel's backers in Brussels and Washington have reacted with familiar enthusiasm. Some progressive voices may have anticipated an international reaction or criticism against Israel. However, the diplomatic reactions seemed familiar, reminiscent of previous situations when Netanyahu was elected and formed an ultra-right wing government. Any expectations that the European Union or the United States may react to the more transparent rhetoric of the Israeli regime fail to understand the structural connection between the Israeli colony and its enablers. Not only is Israel a European settler-colonial outpost in Western Asia. Its continued existence in its current forms as an apartheid regime necessitates the continuity of multifaceted forms of colonial violence.

Political leaders of the European Union could not hide their enthusiasm and continued their excited copy-pasting of a standard

EU political communication. The highest representatives of the European Union warmly welcomed the new Israeli government. Congratulating Netanyahu, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission, [said she was](#) "looking forward to working on strengthening our partnership, promoting peace in the Middle East and addressing the shockwaves of Russia's war against Ukraine." EU Vice President [Josep Borrell congratulated](#) the new Israeli minister of Foreign Affairs, also "[l]ooking forward to working with you on further

The European reactions to the latest atrocity in Jenin are exemplary of the colonial structure of these regimes' political communication.

improving EU-Israel relations." "We have a lot to do together", Borrell added, claiming "[t]he EU is ready to contribute to a revival of #MEPP & to promote a 2 state solution." Borrell even offered a hashtag to a so-called "Middle East Peace Process". Similarly, the EU's special representative for this "process", Sven Koopmans, [congratulated Netanyahu](#) "on returning as [Israeli Prime Minister]." Koopmans expressed his "hope to work closely with the new government to contribute to a lasting peace that brings long-term security, rights and co-existence for Israelis, Palestinians and all their neighbours." Not only does the European Union promise an even stronger cooperation, thus rewarding the Israeli regime for its continuous human rights violations, it also continues its engineering of propaganda on behalf of the Zionist colony and thus perpetuates the creation of consent for anti-Palestinian violence.

The new Israeli regime continues to promote the ideology that the colony has been built on, i.e., settler-colonial conquest, racist segregation, and concepts of ethnic and reli-

gious supremacy. There is no so-called "Peace Process" nor a "Two-State Solution". Nor do these terms have any concrete meaning. Rather, in European political discourse, they serve as propagandistic distractions to Israeli violence and, in fact, potential euphemisms for genocide.

The Israeli regime has killed more than one Palestinian per day since the beginning of the year. In addition to the structural genocidal violence, recent Israeli attacks include the bloodbath in Jenin, in which Israeli forces [killed nine Palestinians](#), including children in "the deadliest single Israeli operation in the West Bank since at least 2005."

No atrocity committed by the Israeli regime is ever brutal enough for Israel's backers in Brussels. Not only has the EU not condemned the targeted killing of Palestinian children and elderly, it has not even named the perpetrator. Rather, EU bureaucrats have once again distorted the situation, gaslighting European and international audiences.

The European reactions to the latest atrocity in Jenin are exemplary of the colonial structure of these regimes' political communication. [Koopmans shared](#) "the deep concerns" of UN Special Coordinator for the so-called "Middle East Peace Process", Norwegian diplomat Tor Wennesland, who had issued a statement that claimed: "I am deeply alarmed and saddened by the continuing cycle of violence in the occupied West Bank. The recent deaths of nine Palestinians, including militants and one woman, during an Israeli arrest operation in Jenin is another stark example." Wennesland further urged "Israeli and Palestinian authorities to de-escalate tensions, restore calm, and avoid further conflict."

This short statement appears characteristic of numerous racist tropes that have been prominent in the Western diplomatic grammar on Palestine for decades. It commences with the expression of an emotion, such as worry, sadness, or, in this case, concern. This is followed by an outright sugarcoating of Israeli violence, in which the Western diplomat offers euphemisms on Israel's behalf. A rather passive "death" becomes the key word rather than "killing", "murder", or other more concrete descriptions. Similarly, the actual action of the Israeli regime is not referred to as a targeted attack or atrocity, or a result of the brutal apartheid regime, but rather as an

“arrest operation”, thus offering further legitimacy for the apartheid violence. Palestinians are not civilians, or victims of colonization, but rather “militants”. This dehumanization of Palestinian victims further constructs them as justifiable targets. Orientalist notions of alleged perpetual chaos are evident in the term “cycle of violence”, which, at the same time, cleverly distorts the power relations and equates the occupier and the colonized population as equally responsible. The Western diplomat calls on both Israeli and Palestinian authorities, thus rhetorically converting the clear imbalance between a first world, Western-backed and nuclear-armed colonial regime with defenseless indigenous people. This equation also obscures the lack of legitimacy of the PA and its colonial cooperation with the apartheid regime. Once the fallacy of “both sides” is rhetorically established, the Western diplomat evokes an equal share of responsibility, which then enables him to euphemize the genocide in Palestine into “tensions” and a “conflict”. This rhetoric culminates in the demand to indigenous people to “de-escalate”, “restore calm”, and “avoid further tensions”, thus blaming Palestinians for their own deaths.

This approach appears characteristic of the EU’s political communication about Palestine. Official reactions to Israeli violence which not only fail to identify Israel as the perpetrator, but in fact blame the victims, further enable the Israeli regime’s continuous perpetuation of the same violence. Throughout the years, the European Union has produced a considerable archive of alleged concern. Bureaucrats continue to copy and paste the same phrases. Besides constantly appearing “deeply concerned”, “worried”, or “disturbed”, the EU has peddled colonial propaganda on behalf of the Israeli regime and perpetuated myths about an alleged “Peace Process” and “Two-State Solution” while reaffirming Israel’s alleged “right to defend itself” through the EU’s preferred key phrases, such as “shared values”, “democracy”, “freedom”, and “human rights”.

In the European political dictionary then, Israeli settler-colonial expansion can easily be referred to as a “peace process”. The underlying ideology of Zionism, colonial and genocidal in its nature, becomes part of European “shared values”. Indeed, there is no contradiction. Europe’s strong position in the world today can be traced back to its colonial invasions and exploitation of the rest of the world. Europeans mutilated, killed, exploited, and enslaved indigenous people, stole their resources and committed numerous genocides. Europeans justified their barbarism through racist fantasies and civilizational discourses which survive until today. France, in its genocides in Algeria and elsewhere, used secularism as a means to deprive indigenous people of their culture, language, religion, and history and to establish a European Christian dominance. The Zionist settler-colonial ideology emerged at the height of European colonialism and shares the fundamental features of European colonialism.

The EU’s fanatical support for the Israeli colony needs to be viewed within a context of global apartheid. Palestine thus serves as a symbol of the European Union’s broader outlook on the world, in which Europe views itself as morally superior and economically advanced, while identifying the overwhelming majority of the world’s population as potential demographic threats. The idea of Europe as a civilized exception in an uncivilized world, which formed the base for Europe’s colonial genocides, continues to be reproduced by European leaders. Fantasies of racist superiority continue to characterize the European self-understanding.

Josep Borrell recently proclaimed his colonial metaphor that constructs Europe as a garden and the rest of the world as a jungle. While the racist implications were obvious in

The core of European identity, that is the idea of Europe as morally superior and economically advanced, only works as long as there is a construction of a culturally inferior, evil, and backward “other”

Borrell’s rhetoric, his words appear rather representative of certain contemporary European political identities that continue to uphold the continent’s colonial and genocidal legacy. “Europe is a garden,” Borrell declared. “We have built a garden. Everything works. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that humankind has been able to build,” he added. The Spanish politician, who held various political positions within the last 36 years, including EU president and Spain’s minister of foreign affairs, imagines his continent as the peak of human civilization. Borrell’s metaphor of the jungle and the garden represents another realization of the continuing fantasy of European superiority.

While Europe is supposedly free and prosperous, the rest of the world is, according to Borrell, “not exactly a garden”, but “a jungle” which “could invade the garden.” This rhetoric evokes the illusion that Europe was a unique place because it had achieved something superior and unprecedented, that the comfort that European citizens enjoy stemmed from intellectual achievements or civilizational progress, rather than from colonial exploitation. The core of European identity, that is the idea of Europe as morally superior and economically advanced, only works as long as there is a construction of a culturally inferior, evil, and backward “other”. In this dominant discourse, Europe defines itself primarily in opposition to the racist fantasies it has about much of the rest of the

world. At a time of heightened crises in Europe, Borrell’s comments exemplify the continuing centrality of Orientalism in the understanding of the self and the other in European terms. Borrell’s speech thus reflects the essence of European self-understanding. Europe is racist.

At the same time, the EU constructs a ‘civilized’ discourse around its racist ideologies in order to prevent actual conversations about apartheid, which have legal implications, to emerge. In January 2023, [Borrell issued a statement](#), claiming that according to the EU Commission “it is not appropriate to use the term apartheid in connection with the State of Israel.” Referring to the controversial IHRA definition, the statement identifies that “[c]laiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour is amongst the illustrative examples included under the IHRA definition.” It cannot be expected that the EU would value indigenous Palestinian voices, which have been muted in Western diplomatic discourse for a century. But at a time, when even [several Western and Israeli organizations](#) have, even within their liberal Zionist framework that denies the colonial dimensions and legitimacy of resistance, identified the situation in Palestine as an apartheid regime, the European Union holds on to its traditional position and weaponizes antisemitism to silence discourses about human rights violations. The statement further claims: “The EU remains committed to a negotiated two-State solution, based on international law, the 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps, as may be agreed between the parties, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.” This is yet another illustration of the EU’s creation of propaganda and perpetuation of myths on behalf of its colony.

The European Union aggressively protects and promotes Israeli crimes. While the Israeli settler-colonial regime is committing a genocide of the indigenous population and openly promoting policies that justify the settler-colonial conquest, it is in particular the European Union that has invested significant efforts in legitimizing Israeli violence by establishing an entire bureaucratic apparatus based on colonial fantasies such as the “Middle East Peace Process” and reproducing an Orientalist discourse that not only blames the indigenous people for their own suffering, but romanticizes Israel’s genocide into Europe’s “shared values”.

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On the Pitfalls of Culturalized Religion

The twin processes of inter-cultural communication and the demand for minority rights are problematised by **Linda Hyökki** using the case study of Finland. Are Muslims losing the religious meaning to their public performance of faith?

As we approach the Holy Month of Ramadan in 2023 CE, (1444 AH), those observing the fast in non-Muslim European societies will have to again deal with debates regarding the facilitation and recognition given to this religious practice. For instance, in Germany, the wellbeing of fasting teenager pupils while attending daily school activities is questioned by authorities looking for justifications to prohibit their pupils from fasting. In Finland, public debates last year circulated around the extra free days given to Muslim students to attend the Eid-al-Fitr festivities. In 2017, a demonstration by a nationalist civil society movement was held in front of a school which had included a small informative section in their morning program relating to Ramadan, including playing the Qur'an from the schools' loudspeakers. The demonstrators claimed that this was a sign of an alleged Islamization of Finland.

As Muslims, we are now faced with the question of as how "palatably" to our non-Muslim fellow citizens we want to present the Holy Month and its contents. Do we frame it in "cultural" terms, focusing on the fun part of community Eid-festivals, or the idea of coming together with family and friends for good food; something many non-Muslims might be able to relate to based on their own experiences of the

Christmas holidays? Do we commercialize it with imitations of Christmas calendars hiding sweets behind every little door for every day of Ramadan, with excessive gift

the phenomenon of culturalized religion has blurred the lines of rightful belonging even more and complicated the question of how religion finds its place in the public sphere

shopping, or by investing hundreds in interior lights and decorations? Do we explain Ramadan to our friends and family as the "Muslim Christmas"? Or should we merely stick to human rights-based argumentation, focusing on the fact that we are talking about a religious obligation that in its most basic form needs to be acknowledged as nothing less or more by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Is the culturalization of our religion when it comes to Ramadan and other practices more of a pitfall than a diplomatic way of receiving not just our

negative but also positive rights of our religious freedom?

"Culture" is a loaded term we use to describe who we are and who we are not. In everyday language it denotes daily practices by the masses we perceive as shared and traditional to a geographical area. We can for instance socially construct with it an image of "Finnish culture". Sometimes, we can use "culture" to differentiate "Muslim culture" from "Christian culture". However, in all these examples, as well as in general, we would be homogenizing not only ourselves but also the "Other" against whom we mirror "our culture". As European societies strive more and more to become religiously neutral and seemingly secular, the phenomenon of culturalized religion has blurred the lines of rightful belonging even more and complicated the question of how religion finds its place in the public sphere.

"Why do you have to leave your own culture?" is a question that many converts face from their social environment upon their conversion to Islam. When in my early adulthood years I made the decision to "leave the Church" I was searching for something else that would fit my understanding of this life and the Hereafter. I never felt that my spirituality would collide with my cultural identity. While many converts face rejection from their immediate families (Brice 2016), I was lucky. When I

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“came out” as a Muslim, my immediate family was rather surprised because they had not thought of me as a religious person at all. Friends and family members who were less close to me scorned my decision. However, whilst I had never been a practising Christian before my conversion to Islam, nobody had then questioned my cultural *belonging* as a Finn.

While Finland has no official state religion, most Finns have followed Protestantism since the Reformation in the 16th century. The Orthodox Church holds the position of the second official national church. How much then does Christianity define “Finnishness”? If we are to look at the developments within the Evangelic Lutheran Church of Finland, Christian identity seems to be going through a crisis. In 2022, a little more than 60 000 individuals “unsubscribed” from their church membership. In comparison to the previous year, this was approximately 10% more, as per official statistics. In a country of a little bit more than 5.5 million inhabitants, such numbers are significant. The motivations of the masses “leaving” the Church are unclear, however, but it would be easy to claim that Finns are becoming more and more non-Christian.

However, as the Christian faith seems to be losing its content value for Finnish people’s self-identification, the right-wing is increasingly instrumentalizing Christianity in their arguments to racially and culturally otherize Muslims. Highlighting Christian identity as part of “Finnishness” affects the way in which Islam as a worldview and religion practised on an everyday basis is seen as incompatible with the “Finnish way of life”. Public debates around the “Muslim Question” (O’Brien 2015), on the belonging of Muslims in Finland as part and parcel of the “Us” and the fostering of Islam as a source of cultural life and religiosity tend to focus on the role of the immigrant Muslims, and their “foreign practices”. At the same time, anti-immigration discourse draws heavily on typical discursive frames of the “Clash of

civilizations”, “Islamization” of society and gender equality. For instance, Laura Huh-tasaari, a member of the True Finns Party and 2018 presidential election candidate, stated during a campaign visit to one of the largest churches in Finland, Mikaelinkirkko, a church located in the city of Turku, that if the Church does not defend Christian values, Christians and Christian traditions, Islam would otherwise wipe Christianity from the country.

Islam and the national cultural identity – or the belonging to the social category of *Finns* – are juxtaposed within such anti-

The culturalization of religion, in the case of Finland, that of Evangelic Lutheran Christianity, serves a domophilic (Ahmad 2013) agenda that constructs the Finnish nation as a unity, into which Muslims – perceived as immigrants and foreigners, strangers – are invited to integrate

Muslim racist discourse. For Muslim converts again, this means their framing as culturally and consequently racially divergent from the rest of the (ethnic) Finns. In the extreme form of this racial othering, converts are considered as “traitors” and outcasts. These were also the words of the Christchurch massacre shooter in New Zealand who in his manifesto described Muslim converts as those whom he “truly hates” because they “turn their backs on their heritage, turn their backs on their cultures, turn their back on their traditions and became blood traitors to their own race”.

Where seeking recognition for Christian practices as religious practices *per se* does not advance their cause as the audience is meant to be the wider Finnish pub-

lic amongst whom religion does not cause an emotional response, the right-wing and nationalist actors are making use of culturalized Christianity. In Finland, this has been observed to manifest when customs that traditionally associated with the adherence to Christianity as a religion are now framed as “part of Finnish culture”. For instance, the practice of singing the religious hymn “Suvivirsi” during the end-of-school year festivities has been argued to belong to civic education (reference). Hence, even though debates have been held about its omission from the program to accommodate the non-participation of children from religious minorities in rituals of a religious nature, proponents argue that whoever wants to integrate into Finnish society must accept such practices as “part of the culture”.

The culturalization of religion, in the case of Finland, that of Evangelic Lutheran Christianity, serves a *domophilic* (Ahmad 2013) agenda that constructs the Finnish nation as a unity, into which Muslims – perceived as immigrants and foreigners, strangers – are invited to integrate. The idea of this unified nation, static in the facets of its identity is then enacted in situations where public debate concerns customs and rituals that due to multiculturalist policies are about to undergo a change. Facing a “threat” to the *domos*, the defence is to argue that such practices cannot be changed, not because of their religious meaning – the hymn sung in the school hall at the end of the year is hardly an act of worship for the children waiting to leave for their holidays – but because they are culturally significant. Changing them would thus endanger the cultural identity of the nation at large.

As such, the culturalization of Christianity constructs also part of the anti-Muslim racist discourse *per se*. As cultural racism, anti-Muslim racism is motivated by nativist thinking and the aim to categorize people to create boundaries of in and out groups. By favoring the majority religion, culturalization dissolves the religious con-

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tent of a practice and makes it more palatable in the context of neutral and secular state policies. The singing of the hymn is regarded as a cultural practice without religious meaning. It is a tradition, a ritual that has been part of the Finnish school system for decades and has a significant symbolic meaning as this particular hymn is only ever sung in this particular context.

However, where do we draw the line between a cultural practice and a religiously significant practice, if even the appraisal of God, as is the case in the hymn, is not supposed to be considered a spiritually relevant act? How should Muslims disassociate their religious beliefs from the practice of standing up – in respect as it is done for religious hymns – and voicing verses about God with references that contradict the principles of *tawhid*? When those who do not want to participate in such rituals should be able to draw on their constitutional right of non-participation in religious practices, this becomes more difficult when the hymn has been discursively constructed as culturally symbolic and significant for civic education. Thus, those who sit silently are seen as unwilling to “integrate”.

As Muslims, we recognize Islam as a religion that can accommodate all socio-cultural contexts of different geographic areas, i.e. the *’urf*, as long as our actions within this accommodation do not conflict with the Islamic principles of revealed knowledge and God’s command (Murad 2020, 208–9) However, while we are adapting our own religious practices to the social environment, such as using different kinds of locally customised dressing styles to follow the principles of *hijab*, cook local dishes for our *iftar* meals respecting the *fiqh* of *halal* and *haram*, building our mosques using local and traditional building materials such as wood in the northern part of Europe, we should not forget that fundamentally, we are acting upon what God has ordained for us as a part of our *deen*.

While we are constantly marginalized

and demonized, we might find ourselves in a defensive position, and make use of the culturalization of religion for taking part in civic life but also when it comes to forming our Muslim identities in our respective local contexts. Thus, we might want to strive towards our *right to belong* in our communities. These strivings can be claims to either highlight the distance of our Islamic lifestyle from those in Muslim majority societies, so as to prove that our cultural loyalties are in the European societies we live in or claims to practising an Islam “free of cultural baggage” or an “authentic” Islam

In our fight against anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, we have to be able to call things by their name. We must stop being apologetic about our religious beliefs and practices and try to disguise them as “culturally relevant” in a multiculturalist framework

that is not imported goods. However, making our religious practices such as Ramadan about “British”, “German”, or “Finnish Islam”, will neither help us in seeking recognition for our rights. Relativizing our acts of *ibada* as “cultural manifestations” will only weaken their footing under the protection of religious freedom.

As the phenomenon of culturalized religion favors the majority religion and thus feeds into the *domophilic* discourse, anti-Muslim racism manifests itself in this regard in a culture war against the manifestations of Islam in the shared public space. For instance, bans on minarets are in anti-Muslim racist discourse are legitimized on the grounds that they are visual representations of Islam that aim to dominate over local cultural symbols, i.e.,

church towers (Cheng 2015; Ayoub and Lohmeier 2016), and used as an arguments against the construction of mosques. Thus, while minarets are strictly speaking not necessary in a mosque building for the believers to offer their prayers, we do need buildings that are built to fill the purpose of a mosque respecting several different requirements for suitable sanitary facilities and the prayer room itself. Thus, discussions related to construction of mosque buildings should focus on the necessity of facilitating the basic human right to practice religion and not delve into arguments about whether the building will resemble mosques in Marrakech, Medina, or Kuala Lumpur.

In our fight against anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, we have to be able to call things by their name. We must stop being apologetic about our religious beliefs and practices and try to disguise them as “culturally relevant” in a multiculturalist framework. The pressure we put by following such strategies on individuals to conform to a certain kind of an identity does more harm than good. We have to protect our status as a religious community and not associate the manifestations of our religious practices with any specific locality, whether it is the “Finnish”, the “British”, the so-called indigenous “Balkan” way, the “Arab”, the “Turkish”, or the “Pakistani” way, or any other favouring of a specific “Muslim culture”. While culturalization of religion might seem like a harmless strategy to recognize the diversity of our societies, Muslims should acknowledge the dangers that such divorcing of religious meaning from religious practices brings with it, regardless of whether it is applied to the majority religion or that of our own.

Linda Hyökki

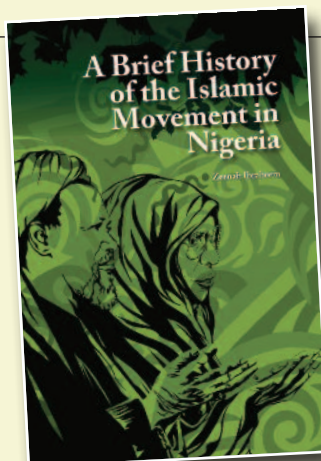
is a researcher and a freelance consultant on anti-Muslim racism and Muslim minorities in Europe. She is in the final stages of her Ph.D., with a thesis on Muslim converts’ experiences of anti-Muslim racism in her native country, Finland.

NEW PUBLICATION

A Brief History of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

By Zeenah Ibrahim

Available from shop.ihrc.org



As a senior member of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Zeenah Ibraheem's history of it is a first-hand account, not just of its ideas, and their fruition, but some of the many turmoils and persecutions it has faced in the last four decades.

This books covers some of the key incidents in the movement’s history, including the Funtua Declaration, as well as the Zaria Massacres of 2014 and 2015.

Muslims, Roe and Wade: Time to Rediscover Ways of Thinking Islam

The furore created by the reversing of Roe v. Wade was a US specific debate. Takings sides, as many Muslims did, has resulted in an obscuring of Islam and the loss of the chance to set an Islamic agenda argues **Nargess Moballeghi**.

Overview

The divisive furore over the abortion debate in the United States and the overturning of Roe vs Wade became an international talking point that spilled into the Muslim world, especially in the West. But why did Muslims fall for the framing of a very particular – and purely American issue – and take a side from within the debate, rather than rise above it to give a much-needed critique of the overarching problems the abortion debate highlighted – about socio-political ethics and limitations in the USA and beyond?

What was Roe vs Wade?

In 1973, the Supreme Court in the United States ruled on the now infamous Roe v Wade lawsuit.

Bought by Jane Roe, an unmarried pregnant woman in Texas, who argued the State's abortion laws infringing her right to marital, familial, and sexual privacy; and that the right to an abortion was absolute.

The State argued that a foetus is a "person" from the time of conception and must be protected.

At the time, abortion was illegal in Texas unless it was done to save the mother's life. To get an abortion was a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

The Court split the argument down the middle. It ruled that abortion was a privacy right and questioned the notion that a foetus is a "person" at conception. But it did not agree the right to an abortion is absolute. So, it created a framework, dividing pregnancy into three 12-week trimesters:

- During a pregnant person's first trimester, the Court held, a state cannot regulate [abortion](#).
- During the second trimester, the state may regulate abortion.
- During the third trimester of pregnancy, the state's interest in protecting the potential human life outweighs the right to privacy. As a result, the state may prohibit abortions unless an abor-

tion is necessary to save the life or health of the pregnant person.

A controversial overturning

In the decades since Roe vs Wade, the politicisation of abortion rights in the USA intensified.

It was a fixture in presidential debates and across the nation, and became a symbol of the fault lines between the left and right in American politics; between the "liberal pro-choicers" and "conservative pro-lifers" anchored in Evangelical Christian ideology, and bolstered by Republican talking points.

**Islam is not
absolutely
pro-abortion, nor
does it criminalise
all forms of
abortion**

By the time Donald Trump became president, the fault lines that were once just the internal nuance of "Superpower USA" had become deep fractures for the world to see.

At a time of the cultural and political crumbling of the "West" – highlighted by the divisions between mainstream liberal tropes and the more obviously rabid right-wing "counter attacks" – the abortion debate took on a new life and meaning and expanded well beyond the borders of the USA. Millions of people across the world who had probably never heard of Roe vs Wade before or understood the context and complexities of the court case, held passionate and bold positions on the issue.

These positions were rooted in either "camp" of the crumbling status quo. Left or Right. Choose a side.

Within this context, Roe vs Wade was overturned on June 24th 2022. **Trump took**

credit. It was his Supreme Court appointees that swung it.

How Muslims participated in the debate

Muslims – particularly in the Western world – seemed to mirror the passionate and polarised debate taking place in the USA, falling in to one or other of the two camps.

Many centres and educational establishments in the United States and Europe put out basic fact sheets about "Islam's position" on abortion, without any nuance or context to the socio-political context of the debate unfolding. Without this context, the implication they were pushing was clear – "Islam is against abortion and more in line with the pro-life camp"

Many Muslims online focused on criticising the liberal approach to sex, relationships and abortion in the West, without critiquing the flaws in the pro-life camp. Whether purposeful or inadvertent, on this issue, they were allies.

On the other side, many Muslims, especially from the younger generation, furiously defended "women's rights" and liberal ideals about the right to abortion.

Both were, at least in part, wrong.

The problem with Absolutism

Unlike the Catholic Church and most of the Evangelical community in the United States, who believe all form of abortion is wrong because life begins at the moment of conception, Islamic rulings reject absolutist stances on abortion.

Islam is not absolutely pro-abortion, nor does it criminalise all forms of abortion.

And beyond that, jurisprudential (*fiqh*) rulings on right and wrong, permissible and forbidden, are so immensely diverse that no individual Muslim can declare that the ruling they follow is universally applicable.

Taking that in to consideration, what are, broadly speaking, the general rules of abortion in Islam?

By 120 days from conception, the scholars of all Islamic schools of thought agree that ensoulment has taken place. Between 40

and 120 days from conception, the four Sunni madhabs have differing opinions, even within their own ranks, about until when and for what reason a woman can have an abortion. Some give unconditional permission to abort until 40 days, some have conditions but no time period, others say abortion without a “valid reason” is disapproved of (makruh), but not forbidden (haram).

The Shia school of thought is seen generally more restrictive when it comes to abortion rulings, but even there, nuance and individual circumstances can completely change the application of a ruling.

This isn't about blanket, one-size-fits all state-legislated law. Even the [ruling of Ayatollah Sistani](#), who is seen as a more conservative Shia religious leader states abortion up to four months into pregnancy is permissible “if the continuation of the pregnancy would considerably harm her health or put her in an unbearable difficulty”.

Who measures unbearable difficulty; a concept that covers emotional, mental and physical distress? This is a private decision. Islam enshrined the right to a private life centuries before the United States Supreme Court even existed.

In fact, it is the presence of this debate — and the breadth of accepted and unproblematised nuance among different schools of thought — that makes it so different from the polarizing forces of the U.S. culture wars that has driven the abortion debate in the USA to the brink of absolutism

The revocation of Roe Vs Wade bought about the risk of rules that went against even the strictest Islamic rulings on abortion. For example, within 48 hours several states reverted back to laws that banned abortion “[without exception of the mother's health](#)”.

As American-Muslim scholar and author Rudolph Ware [stated online](#) at the time “make no mistake about it; the new abortion restrictions enacted in many US states directly infringe upon the religious freedom of Muslims to live by our understandings of religious law. Viewed from the standpoint of Islamic thought, the view that life begins at conception (a tenet of the anti-choice movement) is rooted in a completely flawed evan-

gelical theology that leads directly to infringements on the rights of women in Islam. There are literally countless scenarios in which a woman's right to an abortion would be upheld in Islamic jurisprudence, which will now be precluded by more restrictive

Muslims do not need to become advocates for the foundational position on either side of a “debate” when neither are in line with an Islamic ethos

laws. These differ somewhat from school to school, which is another powerful argument why Muslims should not want SCOTUS writing fatwas for us.”

Or as the American born Shafi'i mufti, Shaykh Musa Furber wrote: “I cannot fathom how a Muslim living under secular law who aspires to follow the Shari'ah could celebrate replacing secular legislation that was more permissive than what the Shari'ah allows...to a legislation that is more restrictive than the Shari'ah allows.”

Muslims shouldn't have taken a side

So if we were not to celebrate the revocation of Roe Vs Wade, were we supposed to condemn it? Which side should we have taken?

Neither.

Muslims do not need to become advocates for the foundational position on either side of a “debate” when neither are in line

with an Islamic ethos on abortion.

Islamic law has a richer history and body of work than the USA and has more diversity and more to say on the issue. We do not need to oversimplify the richness of our religion to fit in to a box, to be one side or the other of a problematic debate.

Instead we should speak to the paradigm problem of left and right, and give solutions — anchored in an Islamic ethos — that could be helpful for everyone, and not just on abortion rights.

It is to understand the context of the problematic debate and how a society like the United States ended up in this paradox. It is to take the opportunity not to be boxed into a debate but show people how to think outside of the box.

To speak to hypocrisies on both sides.

The overturning of Roe vs Wade came about because of a political lobby that warped one specific position in a religion - in isolation - and implemented it to an entire population that is non-religious. A society that actively promotes sexuality and sexual ‘freedom’ in a secular setting. It is rank hypocrisy to then come - within that context - and shove one specific religious position on one group - in this case women. It is oppressive. It is dangerous. It is wrong. And that includes from an Islamic perspective. Especially because it criminalises women for abortion, a concept that is completely antithetical to the Islamic approach — there is no physical punishment or jail time if a Muslim woman has an abortion outside of the religious rules she subscribes to. She has spiritual and physical autonomy.

In fact, if it were Muslims behaving like the USA, the same people who have advocated this abortion ban would have called it what it is - barbaric religious extremism and probably started a war.

Islamophobia — neither side is your friend.

And yet the hypocrisies of the liberal left that fought back against the pro-life movement could be most clearly seen through the lens of Muslims and Islamophobia despite



NIGERIA APPEAL

Currently there are thousands of children, women and men suffering as the result of the violence of the Nigerian police and army. Members of the Islamic Movement have been routinely targeted, with more than 2000 killed over the last six years. They have left behind dependents who are often destitute and shunned. Families are left without enough income for basic necessities like food and clothing, children lose out on education.

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the debate being a solely American issue.

Roe vs Wade was a solely American issue, but yet “America’s Taliban really hates women and minorities,” tweeted Newsweek editor **Naveed Jamali**. MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow, started referring to Texas lawmakers as the “**American Taliban**.” Meanwhile, The Daily Show’s Trevor Noah gave it **his own comedic twist**: “All across the country, women in places like Missouri or even Texas will have the same abortion rights as women under the Taliban in Afghanistan. Think about it. We just evacuated people out of Afghanistan, and now we are going to evacuate them out of Tennessee?” In fact, In September 2021 when Texas banned abortion for all women regardless of circumstances after six weeks of pregnancy, hashtags such as #ShariaLawInTexas and #TexasTaliban were trending.

During the abortion debate #Sharia-SupremeCourt was trending. Ironically, unlike in Texas, abortion is legal in Afghanistan if the mother’s life is in danger. Under a true “Supreme Sharia Court”, an outright ban on abortion would never be considered.

Facts, of course, do not matter. And the implication is clear; the Muslim world is so regressive on women’s rights and reproductive health that any regression in women’s rights in the West means they are falling into the ‘abyss’ of Islam. This is a trope that liberal left pushes, and that benefits the racist right. So why would Muslims want to pander or ally with either? Especially when, it is these

exact tropes about “backwards Islam” and “women’s rights” leads to war. Don’t forget George Bush was hailing the “liberation” of Iraqi and Afghan women as a direct consequence of the wars the USA waged in those countries and said the wars will continue to fight for women’s freedom.

An empowered alternative Muslim solution

Because of the pressure Muslims are under from society as a whole they tend to react on the back foot; trying to find acceptance or prove themselves in spaces they have been told are more ‘free’ than their own. Or alternatively, they react by defending positions they think are in line with Islam, even though they are wrong (like the abortion ban).

Both ways are reactive rather than proactive, and reflect a poor position in the dialogue. In fact Muslim leadership seeming to endorse the abortion ban, presents particular risks to the young Muslim community, especially girls, who may react by becoming more susceptible to attractive and flawed liberal tropes. The liberal left promotes the idea that people have absolute autonomy and freedom to choose. It is an intoxicating ideal. And one that is particularly appealing when the “counter argument” is often reactionary, flawed and misplaced.

Yet, Islam too, says, that anyone can, in fact, chose to do anything they want. The dif-

ference between the liberal position and Islam is that foundationally, in the liberal position, peace and progress is attained by everyone and anyone doing anything they want at any time.

Islam says everyone can chose to do anything. BUT, there will be reverberations and consequences, personally and societally. And so it gives guidelines to what will constitute a peaceful and progressive environment. Islam is a way of life and a warning as to the consequences of deciding not to follow its guidelines and disrupting internal (personal) and external (societal) equilibrium. It is from that perspective that we should have engaged with this issue.

An empowered Muslim position on the abortion debate would have been to provide a clear and superior solution-oriented voice, not an inferior or implicit endorsement that advocates either side within a flawed paradigm.

Nargess Moballegchi

is a multi-platform Journalist and Documentary Filmmaker, with over 15 years work experience in international news and production including at management level. She has extensive expertise and experience working in the Middle East and Europe as a senior news presenter and correspondent. She currently focuses on producing international long-form documentaries, as well as production of programming series, online content and marketing videos.

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Decolonizing Mind

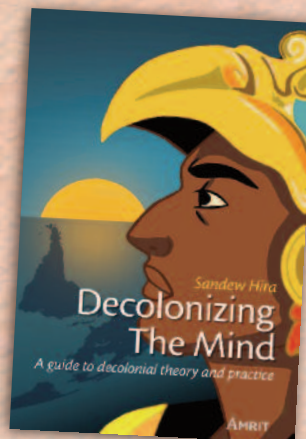
A guide to decolonial theory and practice

By **Sandew Hira**

Meet the author as he launches his book at the IHRC Bookshop & Gallery in London, UK on **15 March 2023**

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In different parts of the world a new decolonial movement is growing that challenges long time narratives in knowledge production and social struggle and transforms activism and social movements. It is driven by key factors such as the fall of the west and the rise of the rest, the collapse of the socialist bloc and in general the crisis of Western civilization.

Hira develops a comprehensive, coherent and integral theoretical framework that draws on different contributions in the decolonial movement, and deals with the practical implication of decolonial theory for decolonial activism.



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Hadith

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Muslim Skeptics in Glass Houses shouldn't Throw Stones

Omar Hijazi argues that the often sectarianized lens of the Muslim blogosphere is finding its authors and activists in strange harmony with the discourse of the Islamophobic West.

In September 2022, popular Muslim website called the Muslim Skeptic published a long rant camouflaged as analysis titled *The Inevitable Failure of Political Shi'ism: The Secularization of Iran*.

After an extensive evaluation of data which the rant itself questions as quite dubious, it reaches a very non-Quranic and illogical conclusion, that being that *Shi'ism can't be political because it was never destined to rule or become a majority, which in effect is another way of determining that it is not the truth*.

Thus, let's address its most illogical conclusion cited above right at the start. Allah the High has never considered majority as a standard of truth as the Quran clearly states:

"A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Quran for a people who know. A herald of good news and a warner, but most of them turn aside so they hear not."

Surah Fusselat (41): Verses 3-4. There are numerous other examples in the Quran and in life where Allah (SWT) states that majority is often on a mistaken path. The entertaining aspect about the conclusion of the rant is that the website and people associated with the website which published the above piece, often push the narrative that they are one of the few true voices of Muslims in the West, in comparison to compassionate imams they spend their time bashing. If truth is in numbers, the compassionate imams are on the right path and the group running the Muslim Skeptic are not.

Delving further into the rant's conclusions, the main narrative it is trying to peddle is that Islamic Iran offers no solution or a concrete program for Muslims: it's a failure. Let's assume for argument's sake that this slogan is correct, well, what solution has the opposing Islamic narrative offered to Muslims? By opposing we mean any forces which oppose, belittle or confront the achievements of the Islamic revolution in Iran. From Erdoğan fan boys to Ikhwan, Saudis or Salafis?

Since the cited rant included a reference to one of the Islamic movement's most astute analysts and journalists, namely Zafar Bangash, let's for a second refer to Mr. Bangash's very important article where he analyzes as why in Egypt the Ikhwan failed

within one year, while in Iran, the Islamic movement has established a government that is still in place after 43 years. To respond to this legitimate and logical question one would need to take off one's sectarian blinkers. Let's also remind ourselves that the past 43 years have not been a smooth ride at all for Iran - they have been 43 years of constant external attempts at destabilization.

Not learning from Egypt

Bangash argues that the inevitability of the Ikhwan's fall came from their failure to bring any change to the institutional infrastructure of the pre-existing Egyptian state. In this they departed from the track taken by Islamic Iran in the days, weeks and years after the revolution. The military and top elites were purged and restructured and those responsible for the corruption and injustices that preceded the revolution (who didn't flee), were tried. The Mursi government however sought to keep the institutions intact. Indeed it is reported that Mursi favoured Sisi with the command of Egypt's military because he was thought to be a pious Muslim whose wife wore the hijab.

As Bangash exactly pinpoints:

"In Egypt on the other hand, the Ikhwan and Mursi assumed that if they played within the existing system and surrendered to US-Zionist interests, they would be allowed to complete their term in office. The haste with which the military overthrew Mursi surprised even seasoned observers. It was assumed that the military would allow sufficient time for Mursi to fail - he was set up to fail by the entrenched old guard - and people would automatically turn against him. This would have happened had he been given enough time but it seems Egypt's imperialist and Zionist masters got impatient and decided to strike.

"This brings us to the question of clarity of thought in the Islamic movement. Most leaders of Islamic movements fail to analyze the socio-economic and political order in society properly. They as-

sume that there is nothing wrong with the prevailing system; and all that is needed is for good, honest men to run it more efficiently. Events in Egypt have once again exposed the fallacy of such thinking and the price the Ikhwan have had to pay. This scenario will no doubt repeat itself in every Muslim society where such faulty thinking prevails. True leadership sets a directional course, and inspires and guides people toward achieving it. When the collective energies of even a small number of ordinary people are harnessed for the achievement of a pre-set goal, the results are often spectacular. This is what the Sirah of the noble Messenger (pbuh) teaches us."

The Muslim Skeptic & Co, reading this piece might sloganeer how the Egyptian Ikhwan were not on the right Aqeeda, etc. Fine, lets assume this is true, what about the so called "Islamic revolutionaries" running Idlib today? What have they achieved? With immense NATO backing on financial and political levels, they are doing nothing but fighting each other. What socio-economic program have they managed to create for their own constituency? Those so called Ahul-Salaf cannot even get along with their own supporters let alone manage running a functional state.

Whilst Islamic Iran's institution building is not without criticism, its attempts to create Islamic institutions afresh reflects Islamic political thinking that structures are not neutral, they must be built with the thought and meaning that Islamic values and ethics bring.

Again, for argument's sake, let's adopt the rant's sectarian narrative and label Islamic Iran a failure. It's a "failure" which under 43 years of severe sanctions, produced a scientific output increase of 18-fold between 1996 and 2008. It's a state system which while all other so called Sunni Muslim states sold out the Palestinians, unapologetically provides the means of self-defence to Palestinians. It's the only Muslim state which retaliated against US military bases in the region when its General, Qassem Soleimani was killed. At the height of the Cold War, not even the USSR dared to directly target US military bases.



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The Divide and Rule of US Foreign Policy Skeptic

The type of “analysis” published against Islamic Iran by the Muslim Skeptic is a type of narrative which is aimed at directing the energy of Islamic socio-political movements and masses away from neo-colonialism and towards the divide and rule project. It’s an ignorant narrative with devastating effects for the Muslim world. It echoes the policy papers of so many US think tanks: [take down Iran](#), [pit Muslims against each other](#) and socially engineer a European and American Islam.

Indeed with the current attempts to destabilise Iran and [foment regime change](#) through the infiltration of the protests after the death of Mahsa Amini, this type of acerbic reaction to the project of the Islamic Revolution, makes the authors strange bedfellows with the most anti-Islamic and racist groups and movements.

Whether this is the NATO cheerleader Masih Alinejad, the terrorist cult MeK, the Israeli regime and various Zionist factions masquerading as the champions of women’s rights or those who thrive on Islamophobia, Islamic Iran is in their crosshairs. The Muslim Skeptic’s ire, rather than engagement with the only successful example of Islamic revival and political mobilisation in recent times, simply makes them another voice aligned with the neo-colonial order against all forms of Islamic organisation.

Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt, that everything said in the rant published by the Muslim Skeptic is correct and the “Aqeeda” of the Muslim Skeptic types is correct; what working strategic project has it produced for Muslims in the past 20 to 30 years? Al Qaeda? Taliban? Secular AKP? Saudi monarchy? They don’t have that many options to pick from and the options they do have are outright embarrassing given their claim that:

“Shi’ism was thus secularized from *within* by the Khomeinist

revolution, but it was due to the “inadequate” nature of Shi’ism itself. Like Christianity, it was flawed from the onset and is thus unable to impact society on a larger scale. And when pushed to do so, it was destined to submit itself to the secular world.”

The Muslim Skeptic’s abundant critiques of Saudi Arabia on its pages and its mania for Westernisation is a more apt target for criticism, should the Muslim Skeptic wish to critique inevitable failures of Muslim projects. The Saudi ‘liberalisation plan has simply brought to light lifestyles of its elites now to be rolled out as part of the culture of the country ruled by the ‘guardians of the two holy places’. The building of The Line, argued by critics to be an MBS plan for a party city to rival Dubai (and Jeddah and Riyadh as it happens), the normalisation of unveiling, the open recognition of queer personalities and culture is just the public face of the private Saudi shame that has characterised that country’s elites since its inception. If we take the Muslim Skeptic’s own rather basic arguments to their conclusion, then the type of policies shown in the [WION video](#) (‘Gravitas: Saudi Arabia does the unthinkable, throws a ‘rave party’ in Riyadh’) on YouTube about the four-Day rave in Riyadh at the end of 2021 shows the logical conclusion of Al-Salaf’s flawed Aqeeda.

It is exactly this inability to engage with other Muslims, and to critique but engage with the differences between us that perpetuates the oppression of the ummah and indeed the majority of the people of the world, denied knowledge or the ability to know Islam in any form except the caricatures created by aggressive regimes like the US and Israel, and perpetuated by the ‘Muslim Skeptic’ type narratives that do nothing except divide Muslims on behalf of those who would rule.

Indeed, they fall into the well worn trap of those who would socially engineer Islam

and Muslims into subservient states of the West. In these narratives Islam and Muslims have no history, culture or ethics outside of these narratives. A century ago Muslim women were seductresses and overly sexualised, now they are described as sexually repressed and in need of saving. Both these narratives are evidence, as even the clumsiest of feminists (in a lucid anti-racist moment) would concede as evidence of racist misogyny. Yet, in ‘critiquing’ Yasmin Mogahed’s comments about the Taliban, the site just [reinforces the stereotypes](#) of Islam that have been perpetuated by those claiming Islam hates women: Yes, Islam is more ‘misogynistic’. Time for Muslims to fully embrace this. Why deny it? What the West considers ‘misogyny’ is really just wisdom and sheer brilliance, so Muslims can stop apologizing for it. The same piece rages against work on female hadith scholars as somehow pandering to ‘feminism’, undermines the nobility and of the female Sahaba who fought in the early battles of Islam with a list of exceptions as to their unexceptionally.

This was a missed opportunity to highlight how Muslim civil society in the US has been instrumentalized in the ‘forever wars’ by becoming the foremost proponent of the narratives that are part of that instrumentalization.

While the editorial board and those pushing the narrative published in the Muslim Skeptic against Islamic Iran are busying themselves with being keyboard warriors, Islamic Iran is battling to overcome real hardships and the West-centric global order in the region. Thus, to those ranting against Islamic Iran under a so-called Islamic veneer, go produce a functional state system run by your own Ulema which does not bend to imperialism and Zionism. Only then can your rants be considered to be analysis. Until then, they are just rants, nothing more.

Omar Hijaz

is a descendant of migrants from Hijaz, an educator, translator, writer and traveller.

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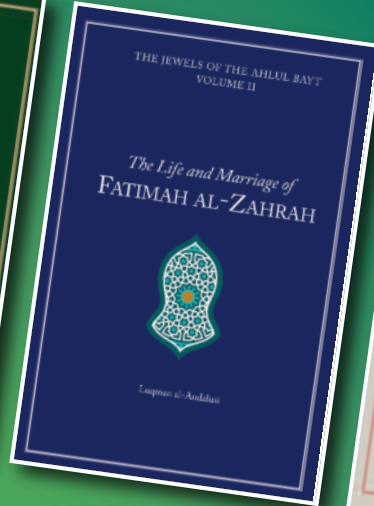
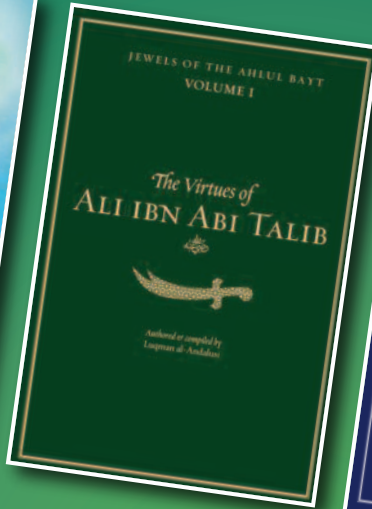


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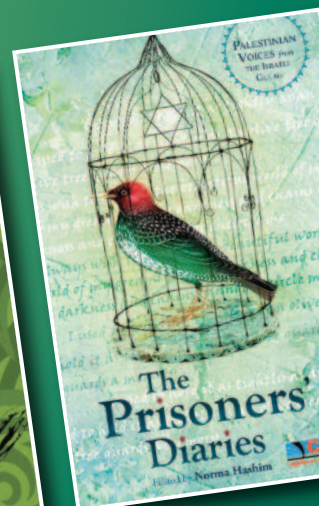
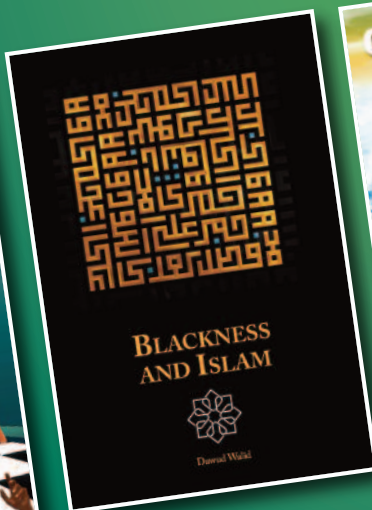
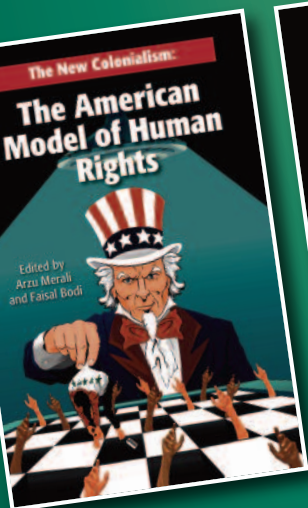
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MUSLIM UNITY

Message for Eid ul-Fitr

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Imam Achmad Cassiem

is a veteran anti-apartheid activist who was imprisoned on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela for two terms, the first of which when he was only seventeen years old. An active member of the Pan African Congress, Cassiem headed Qibla, the Islamic movement that fought apartheid with the many comrades of different movements.



Why do we celebrate Eid

By taking this brief survey of Islam operative in an oppressive Jahili environment, we have at least obtained an inkling why Muslims are exuberant and enthusiastic about Eid-ul-Fitr.

We are not just celebrating our personal victories over greed, selfishness, arrogance and indiscipline, but also the victory of truth over falsehood, justice over injustice, and the triumph of reason over idiocy.

The social dynamics of Islam indicate that Islam is intended as the force which will end the domination of man by man. And in order to do this, Islam treats the cause first and then the symptoms. And in order to sustain social changes it is necessary that we possess not only political and economic power but also moral and intellectual power. In fact, political and economic power without moral and intellectual power is useless and self-defeating.

It is for this reason that we say we do not dress up politics in religious robes, neither do we dress up religion in political robes - we have Islam and that is all we need to have.

Rasulullah (SAW) spelt out the Muslims attitude to oppression very clearly:

'A Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim; he does not oppress him, neither does he abandon him when he is oppressed.'

[Hadith]

'Do not do injustice unto others, nor let injustice be done unto you.'

[Hadith]

"Help your brother, whether oppressing or oppressed." People asked: "O Allah's Apostle! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?" The Prophet (SAW) said: "BY PREVENTING HIM FROM OPPRESSING OTHERS"

[Hadith]

Let it be universally known that those in possession of the truth are in possession of a most powerful instrument, a most effective instrument for dynamic social action.

If truth did not bring about practical results, then there would be no sense in choosing truth rather than falsehood.

The total liberation of mankind is the immediate task of the present generation. And the Qur'an not only furnishes us with the authority but also with the method for this radical social transformation. And the command is very clear:

'And WHY SHOULD YE NOT FIGHT IN THE CAUSE OF ALLAH AND OF THOSE WHO BEING WEAK, ARE ILL-TREATED (and OPPRESSED)? - Men, women and children, whose cry is: Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors and raise for us from Thee one who will help!'

[Qur'an 4:75]

Is it, therefore, surprising that Muslims have been celebrating Eid for more than one thousand four hundred years! And the joy is spontaneous and enthusiastic because:

'He that obeys Allah and His Rasul (SAW) has already attained the highest achievement.'

[Qur'an 33:71]

When the Eid celebrations are over in their outward manifestations, then those who have imbibed the inner manifestations must remember: We, as Muslims, have a tremendous responsibility to eradicate oppression, exploitation, racism and all forms of injustice, and replace it with a universal system of social justice.

In South Africa we shall not be found wanting; in fact here we have an even greater responsibility and we shall, in a true spirit of universal brotherhood, respond to the call. O Muslims!

'Be not weary and faint-hearted, crying for peace, when ye should be uppermost, FOR ALLAH IS WITH YOU AND WILL NEVER PUT YOU IN LOSS FOR YOUR (GOOD) DEEDS.'

[Qur'an 47:35]

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